



## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

207 STATE HOUSE  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62706

**JB PRITZKER**  
GOVERNOR

September 4, 2020

Mike Paone, Joliet Region Chamber of Commerce & Industry and neighboring chambers  
Dawn M. Mushill, Troy/Maryville/St. Jacob/Marine Chamber of Commerce  
Nancie Zobrist, Highland Chamber of Commerce

Dear Chambers of Commerce leaders,

My office is in receipt of the letter from the Joliet Region Chamber of Commerce & Industry and neighboring chambers, the Troy/Maryville/St. Jacob/Marine Chamber of Commerce, and the Highland Chamber of Commerce, regarding increased COVID-19 mitigation measures instituted in Region 7. Thank you for reaching out to provide your feedback.

It's my fervent desire to get people back to work and businesses running at peak capacity and growing. But our economy cannot fully recover until we reduce the positivity level across our state and our nation. Indeed, the spread of the virus is the major obstacle to a return to normalcy. As you know, Region 7 – Will and Kankakee Counties – joined Region 4 in exceeding an 8 percent average positivity rate for three consecutive days or more. As a result and based upon the resurgence plan I announced in July which was developed in consultation with the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and with the nation's top medical experts, new, stricter mitigations must be imposed until positivity rates decline. The positivity level in Region 7 exceeds that of Arizona, California and nearly half of the states in our country, and it is far beyond the CDC and WHO recommended positivity level of 5%. High and increasing positivity has the potential to turn exponential – as it did recently in the Sun Belt – and it can quickly overwhelm our healthcare system and result in greater sickness and death than we've already seen. The high positivity levels of Regions 4 and 7 are of grave concern for everyone in the state, and it demands a renewed effort to slow the spread of the virus.

None of the mitigation strategies are intended to punish or harm anyone. The mitigations imposed are those that the medical experts have determined are the most efficacious for keeping the people of Will and Kankakee counties and Metro East safe and healthy, as we all work toward prosperity as soon as possible. For example, indoor service at bars and restaurants and other similar venues has been identified by scientists as very often the host to potentially risky behavior that includes loud talking, not wearing masks and drinking alcohol, which can make people less risk conscious. That increases the viral load which in turn increases the likelihood of spread as it is carried home asymptotically by people and transmitted to more vulnerable friends and family.



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

207 STATE HOUSE  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62706

**JB PRITZKER**  
GOVERNOR

This virus is insidious. It's a creeping menace that spreads invisibly and can either make people very sick or cause death.

Illinois' positivity is on the rise, alarmingly so in Regions 4 and 7. We must reverse the trend. In the coming days and weeks, depending upon the response of the regions to mitigations, the resurgence mitigation strategies could be relaxed — or they could be maintained or even strengthened. To a large extent that will be up to the residents of each region. If mitigation strategies are followed and residents wear a mask and keep 6 feet of physical distance when in public, and if local establishments and officials enforce the capacity limits and mask mandate, there will very likely be a reduction of community spread and of positivity rates.

I appreciate your engagement and partnership in keeping the people of Illinois safe. I pray that we will soon make it back to a world where our days are not consumed by trying to prevent new cases, deaths, and increasing positivity rates.

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JB Pritzker".